

OF WOOD AND STONE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANCIENT SOUTH ARABIAN CONSTRUCTION TEXTS
AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the Hebrew Bible and Ancient South Arabian texts share a common usage of the phrase “wood and stone,” with a specific focus on Minaic construction texts from the 5th-2nd century BCE and four texts from Kings (1 Kings 5:32; 15:22; 2 Kings 12:13; 22:6). In both corpora “wood and stone” functions as a merism, a literary device that uses two pieces to express a whole. Furthermore, the phrase also appears in contexts denoting divine favor and expresses the religious-political authority of the primary agent(s) behind the construction. This shared usage of “wood and stone” helps solve an exegetical difficulty in Exodus 7:19 and also hints at a deeper inland tradition between ancient Palestine and Yemen that shared similar conceptions of how political-religious authority should be expressed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jason (Jay) Weimar graduated with a BA in History from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 2012 and then with an M Div from Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson in 2016. His interests lie in studying parallels between the Hebrew Bible and Ancient South Arabian material.

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Of Wood and Stone:

A Comparative Study of Ancient South Arabian Construction Texts and the Hebrew Bible

The Biblical account of the building of Solomon's temple has been fertile ground for comparison with other ancient Near Eastern construction texts. Records from Egypt, Sumer, Ugarit, Anatolia, Phoenicia, Assyria, Elam, and Persia have all been mined to help scholars better understand this story. However, it has never been compared to the hundreds of Ancient South Arabian (ASA) construction texts that are contemporaneous with the authorship of Kings, even though many of them have been known and available in translation for over a hundred years.¹

This paper seeks to rectify this situation by showing how these inscriptions provide insight to the Biblical corpora. I will argue that like the ASA texts, the Hebrew Bible uses the phrase "wood and stone" as a merism for all construction materials in contexts denoting divine favor and the dedicants' political-religious authority.² I will first define the term merism and provide a method for identifying them. Then, after describing the linguistic and archaeological contexts of the ASA and Hebrew Bible texts, I will use this methodology to establish that "wood

¹ In the construction text category, I also include those texts sometimes classified as dedicatory due to their usage of the verb "to dedicate" *sʾl*. This is in opposition to DASI's (and hence CSAI's) editorial criteria in which they state: "Inscriptions can generally be assigned to a specific typology because they follow textual models with fixed formal and structural characteristics. Epigraphs are known to be largely repetitive, but the textual model goes beyond the content of an inscription... The author deliberately chose which model he wished to follow; therefore these schemas are not reconstructions by modern scholars." However, inscriptions often do not follow fixed formulas, resulting in arbitrary and forced classifications. Hence, M 185 and M 203 contain three verbs, "built, dedicated, and repaired" (*bny wsʾl wsʾhdt*). CSAI notes that both of these texts do not strictly fit into either category, yet even so they classify M 185 as a construction text and M 203 as a dedicatory text. Furthermore, M 283 commemorates the construction of a defensive curtain wall, yet because it uses "dedicated and devoted... all the construction" (*sʾl wsʾqny... kl mbny*) instead of "built and dedicated" (*bny wsʾl*), it is considered a dedicatory inscription. Oddly, Avanzini who heads the DASI project, takes a different methodology elsewhere, which I find to be much more agreeable: "Naturally, a typological classification is often subjective, it is a matrix invented by the modern scholar not by the author of the ancient text. Distinctions are often ambiguous; a text can contemporaneously be to commemorate a construction, place it under the protection of a god and establish its ownership." DASI, "Epigraph Cards," n.p. [cited 13 May 2017]. Online: <http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=109&navId=0>. Alessandra Avanzini, *Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions I-III: Qatabanic, Marginal Qatabanic, Awsanite Inscriptions* (Arabia Antica 2; Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2000), 9-10.

² My concept of political-religious authority in conjunction with construction texts is taken from Alessandra Avanzini, "For a Study on the Formulary of Construction Inscriptions" in *Ṣayḥadica: Recherches sur les inscriptions de l'Arabie Préislamique offertes par ses collègues au professeur A. F. L. Beeston* (eds. Christian Robin and Muḥammad Bâfaḳīḥ ; Paris : Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner S. A., 1987): 20.

and stone” is used as a merism. I will then demonstrate in both sources that the merism occurs in contexts of divine favor and political-religious authority. I will then conclude by arguing that this shared usage and context of the merism also helps solve an exegetical difficulty in Exod 7:19 and additionally suggests a shared tradition of political-religious authority between ancient Palestine and South Arabia.

Definition and Identification of Merisms

To start, a merism is a literary device used to express a whole by citing two (or sometimes more) of its parts, in which a literal reading may result in an inaccurate understanding of the idea being conveyed.³ It can take various grammatical forms. For instance, there can be a simple copula, as in Ezek 21:3 where every tree is signified by the expression: “I will devour among you every green and every dry tree” (וְאֶכְלָה בָּהֶם כָּל-עֵץ-יָחַד וְכָל-עֵץ יָבֵשׁ).⁴ They can also employ prepositions, as in the common Biblical phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” (מִדָּן וְעַד-בְּעֶשְׂבָּה), which signifies all of Israel’s attributed land.⁵ Merisms can also occur in poetic parallelism, for example, in Judg 5:4 “the earth quakes, also the heavens drip” (אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה גַם-שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ), in which “earth” and “heaven” are meant to encompass the entire cosmos.⁶ They can be verbal, as in Deut 31:2 where Moses at age 120 was “no longer able to leave or enter” (לֹא-יָכוֹל עוֹד לֵצֵאת וּלְבוֹא), which means that he was unable to do any daily activity.⁷ The word order of a merism is not always consistent and may be reversed. For instance, in Jer 37:4, before Jeremiah was thrown in prison, he “entered and left amidst the people” (בָּא וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעָם), a reversal of the order in Deut 31:2 that still communicates the same meaning.

³ Jože Krašovec, “Merism — Polar Expression in Biblical Hebrew,” *Biblica* 64 (1983): 232.

⁴ Krašovec, “Merism,” 236.

⁵ Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 2 Sam 17:11; 2 Sam 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 5:5. A. M. Honeyman, “*Merismus* in Biblical Hebrew,” *JBL* 71 (1952): 11-18.

⁶ Jože Krašovec, *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen* (BibOr 33; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 11-16.

⁷ Honeyman, “*Merismus*,” 15.

However, not all combinations of terms are merisms. For instance, the terms “chariot” רֶכֶב and “horse” סוּס frequently appear next to each other in the Bible (e.g. 2 Kings 2:11; 10:2; Jer 17:25; Psa 76:7). However, this is not a merism, but is rather the result of a logical and practical association, as chariots need horses in order to operate. Sometimes it may be more difficult to identify a merism with certainty. Therefore, I propose three questions which may help with identifying merisms.

First, does the context of the occurrence hint that a merism is being used? For instance, does the language which precedes or follows the word pairing suggest a greater meaning? Sima notes that merisms are commonly preceded by their own meaning in ASA texts as a way to avoid misunderstandings. This is the case in CIH 619, which reads “let no one inquire of Bkrm... any person, big or small” (*w'l dš' l Bkrm... kl 'ns'm bħtm wqtnm*). Here “any person” is split into two more specific parts in “big or small.”⁸ This similarly occurs in the Hebrew Bible, such as in Gen 19:4, in which “the people of Sodom surrounded the house, from young unto old, all the people to the last” (אֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם נָסְבוּ עַל־הַבַּיִת מִנָּעַר וְעַד־זָקֵן כָּל־הָעָם מִקְּצֵה).⁹

Second, would a literal reading of the text fail to encompass the entire range of intended meaning? For example, Exodus 22:3 details restitution for the theft of an animal: “If the stolen animal is found alive in [the thief’s] hand, whether ox, donkey, or sheep, he will repay double” (אִם־הִמָּצָא תִּמָּצָא בְּיָדוֹ הַגֵּנֶבֶה מִשּׁוֹר עַד־חֲמֹר עַד־שֶׂה חַיִּים שְׁנַיִם יְשַׁלֵּם). But what if the animal is a horse? Surely horses also fall under the purview of this law. Logically, the list represents all domesticated animals, not just oxen, sheep, and donkeys, and is therefore a merism.¹⁰

⁸ Alexander Sima, “Untersuchungen zur Phraseologie altsüdarabischer Inschriften: Paronomasie, Merismus und Klangfiguren,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 91 (2001): 303-305.

⁹ Honeyman, “*Merismus*,” 12.

¹⁰ Honeyman, “*Merismus*,” 13.

Third, does the phrase appear elsewhere where its intended usage is clearer? A few verses after Exod 22:3, there is a law regarding repayment if someone entrusts an animal to his or her neighbor for safekeeping, and the animal is subsequently lost. Exodus 22:9 begins: “If someone gives to their neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast...” (כִּי־יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ (חֲמֹר אוֹ־שׁוֹר אוֹ־שֶׂה וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה). Here, the addition of “or any beast” explains that the law includes more than just donkeys, oxen, and sheep. Hence, this usage helps attest that a merism indeed is being used with same “ox or donkey or sheep” phrase in the aforementioned Exod 22:3.

Thus, immediate context, incongruous literal readings, and other usages can be used to help ascertain whether juxtaposed terms are acting as a merism. Through this study, these criteria will be used to examine the “wood and stone” pairing in the ASA texts and Hebrew Bible.

The Ancient South Arabian Construction Texts

Within the ASA corpus, there are nineteen construction texts that contain the phrase “wood and stone” or an equivalent variant. It can also be reconstructed or restored in another eleven texts.¹¹ With the possible exception of RAMRY/ 94-az-Zālif 1 no. 1, a Ḥaḍramitic text which dates to the C period (1st century BCE-2nd century CE), all of these can be dated to either the B (5th-1st century BCE) or the B1 (5th-3rd century BCE) periods using Avanzini’s paleographic dating scheme.¹² Within the sub-languages of ASA, the phrase appears twenty seven times in the

¹¹ Those which contain the phrase are A-20-212, M 102, M 164, M 169, M 185, M 203, M 236, M 247, M 252, M 268, M 283, M 347, M 447, Maʿīn 1, Maʿīn 6, Maʿīn 7, Maʿīn 24, MuB 97, and Ja 557. Those in which it can probably be reconstructed are M 172, M 179, M 186, M 197, M 199, M 303, M 312, M 418, M 423, RAMRY/ 94-az-Zālif 1 no. 1, and Y.92.B.A 21+30.

¹² Avanzini, *Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions I-III*, 27-29. The possible exception, RAMRY/ 94-az-Zālif 1 no. 1, reads “S¹yn bql, from the bottom to the top... and limestone. Ys³b¹l placed under the will of S¹yn his life, his faculties, his children, and his property...” ([..]rm s¹yn bql ‘s¹nm *’*d mn ‘y [..]dm wblqm wtd¹ ys³b¹l b¹[dn] s¹y*’* nfs¹s¹ w¹dns¹ wwl¹ds¹ wq[nys¹...]) What is problematic here is that where one would expect “wood” to precede “and limestone” wblqm, there is [..]dm instead of the expected [..]dm. However, there are two other engraving errors within this text, and it is possible that the engraver mistakenly put a *q* instead of a *d*, as CSAI posits could have happened. This is interesting because the slab itself was found inside of a mud brick building, and would be an instance of the merism encompassing materials that were not explicitly mentioned in the text itself. Alexander V. Sedov, *Temples of Ancient Ḥaḍramawt* (Arabia Antica 3; Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2005), 154. CSAI, http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_epi&prjId=1&recId=1684.

Minaic corpus and once each in Qatabanic, Sabaic, and Ḥaḍramitic, if the aforementioned RAMRY/ 94-az-Zālif 1 no. 1 is included.¹³ For the sake of simplicity, I will focus on the Minaic corpus since the majority of the inscriptions are in Minaic and will refer to texts in the other languages when they provide insights.

Of these Minaic texts, three are unprovenanced, twenty can be provenanced to Yṯl, and four to Qrnw.¹⁴ All the texts from Yṯl and Qrnw come from the defensive fortifications surrounding the cities, except for M 203 which originated in the Temple of Nkrḥ but was displaced in modern times.¹⁵ Yṯl is located in modern day Baraqish in northwest Yemen. It was found by Halévy in 1870, and underwent systematic excavations by French expeditions four times between 1978-1990. An Italian team worked at the site in 1989-1992 and 2003-2007.¹⁶ The site is enclosed by fortifications, 237 meters in length and 167 meters at its widest diameter, complete with 57 projecting bastions that ascend up to 14 meters high. The core of the wall consists of a mud brick mass that reaches 5-7 meters high, which is enclosed by a limestone exterior. Above the mud brick, horizontal wood beams, since decayed, were used to provide

¹³ There are also several instances in which “wood and stone” appear within a material list but do not function as a merism. In Ḥaḍramitic, three texts from Wādī Mayfa‘a concerning wall construction add “bricks” *ftl* to “wood and stone” (MAFYS-Naqb al-Hajar 2; MAFYS-Naqb al-Hajar 3; RES 3869). However, this does not seem to be functioning as a merism as wood, stone, and bricks are essentially all the materials used to construct a wall. Additionally, four texts in Qatabanic also include “wood and stone” among a longer list of materials. The sole possible exception to this is Pi. Ḥuwaydar A, which only mentions “stone, wood, and sandstone” *’bnm w’qm wblqm*. However, the same author and his father do not seem to be using the merism in other texts in which they enumerate all the resources that they use and hence it cannot be said that a merism is intended for certain (CIAS 47.11/b 2, MuB 673, RES 3880).

¹⁴ The unprovenanced inscriptions are A-20-212, M 303, and M 312. Those from Qrnw are Ma‘īn 1, Ma‘īn 6, Ma‘īn 7, and Ma‘īn 24. The rest come from Yṯl.

¹⁵ A temple is not outright mentioned in M 203, as there is a lacuna. Yet it does mention that the dedicants built and restored various parts of a temple and that the construction was done “for Nakrah.” Furthermore, the only remaining fragment of the text which has been found in the French and Italian excavations was located some 50 meters east of the temple of Nakrah. Alessandro de Maigret and Christian Robin, “Le temple de Nakrah à Yathill (aujourd’hui Barāqish), Yémen. Résultats des deux premières campagnes de fouilles de la mission italienne,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 137 (1993): 468.

¹⁶ Jérémie Schiettecatte, ed., “Baraqish,” CSAI, n.p. [cited 3 June 2017]. Online: http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_sit&prjId=1&navId=854618434&recId=243.

interior support to the walls. Both mud brick and limestone have been found in excavations of the Temple of Nkrḥ as well.¹⁷

Qrnw is located in modern day Maʿīn, also in northwestern Yemen. Similar to Yṯl, it was first discovered by Halévy in 1870, and then excavated by the French in 1978 and 1981, as well as by the German expeditions in 1979.¹⁸ Its defensive fortifications are built like those of Yṯl, in which the towers and walls have a stone exterior with a mud brick interior. On the east wall of the city, the mud brick interior rises to nearly 8 meters, but the stone wall above it has not been preserved. Furthermore, erosion on the eastern wall has revealed that such fortifications also used mud brick for their foundations.¹⁹

The inscriptions from these sites use various words for the phrase “wood and stone.” Only one word is used for “wood” ʿd, which is a cognate to the Hebrew word for “wood” עץ. However, three different terms for stone are used. First, there is the general term for stone ʿbn, a cognate to the Hebrew word “stone” אבן. Second, the word “cut stone” tqr refers to the stone blocks on the exterior face of construction works, which were decorated by a finishing technique. This is opposed to other blocks used in the inside of walls, which would not need to be decorated. Third, “limestone” blq refers to the specific and only type of stone used in construction of the Minaeans’ fortifications. This word does not seem to distinguish between different types of limestone, even though the Minaeans at Yṯl did in their construction work. Hence, while a lumachelle type of limestone, which contained visible fossils, was used in the

¹⁷ Brian Doe, *Monuments of South Arabia* (Naples/Cambridge: Falcon/Oleander, 1983), 127-128. Jean-François Breton, *Les fortifications d’Arabie méridionale du 7^e au 1^{er} siècle avant notre ère* (Archäologische Berichte aus dem Yemen 8; Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 27, 51-52. 160-161. Alessandro de Maigret, “The Excavations of the Temple of Nakrah at Barāqish (Yemen),” *PSAS* 21 (1991): 160-161.

¹⁸ Jérémie Schiettecatte, ed., “Maʿīn,” CSAI, n.p. [cited 3 June 2017]. Online: http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_sit&prjId=1&navId=821402464&recId=48.

¹⁹ Breton, *Les fortifications*, 21, 27, 53.

construction of the temple of Nkrh, a more solid oolitic limestone was used for the walls.

However, the term *blq* was used in construction texts to refer to both types of limestone.²⁰

Establishing the Merism

There are two reasons supporting the idea that “wood and stone” was used as a merism in ASA texts. First, the two words appear regularly in a formulaic statement with few variants. Minaic construction texts containing “wood and stone” tend to be extremely formulaic. They usually begin with the names of the individuals overseeing the construction work, followed by verbs denoting that the building was “dedicated” (*s³l*’), “devoted” (*s¹qny*), “built” (*bn*y), and/or “repaired” (*s¹hdt*) the building in question for a particular god. Then, there is a list of up to three pairings describing the extent of the construction. The inscription concludes with an invocation of the gods or by committing the dedication to them. For example, M 283 from Ytl reads:

(3)²¹ ...Whb’l son of Hm’tt, of the clan of Yf’n dedicated and devoted to ‘ttr d-Qbd, Wd, Nkrhm, ‘ttr d-Yhrq, and ‘tr Yhrq all the construction of the curtain wall Ddn (4) of stone and wood, the front wall and the back wall, from the foundations to the top, with the offerings which he financed for Whb’l and his sons, the clan of Yf’n, for the gods. And ‘ttr d-Qbd and the gods were agreeable with this offering and they were pleased with this dedication. By ‘ttr d-Qbdm, Wd, Nkrh, ‘ttr d-Yhrq and ‘tr (5) Yhrq. During the time of ‘byd’ Rym son of Hyw Sdq king of Ma’in. And the clan of Yf’n committed their dedication and their inscriptions to all the gods of Ma’in and Ytl against anyone who would deface them from their place.²²

(3) ...whb’l bn hm’tt hl yf’n s³l’ ws¹qny ‘ttr dqbđ wwd wnkrhm w ‘ttr dyhrq w ‘tr yhrq kl mbny shftn ddn (4) ‘bnm w ‘dm qdmm wm ‘drm bn ‘s²rs¹ ‘d s²qrn bfr’ wf’ kwbb’l wbbns’w hl yf’n k’l ltn wy’tmr ‘ttr dqbđ w’l ltn bdn fr’n wys’tqdwn dn s³l’n b ‘ttr dqbđm wwdm wnkrhm w ‘ttr dyhrq w ‘tr y (5) hrq bymh ‘byd’ rym bn hyw sdq

²⁰ Alessio Agostini, “Building materials in South Arabian inscriptions: observations on some problems concerning the study of architectural lexicography,” *PSAS* 40 (2010): 87-88, 91. Christian Robin, “À propos des inscriptions in situ de Barāqish, l’antique Ytl (Nord-Yémen),” *PSAS* (1979): 106-107. Breton, *Les fortifications*, 22-23.

²¹ I have omitted the first two and a half lines because they are merely a long list of names.

²² Translated following CSAI, http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_epi&prjId=1&navId=446097017&recId=2996.

*mlkh m'n wrtd hl yf'n s³l's'm w's'trs'm kl l'lt m'n wyt bnd ys'nkrs'm bn
mqmhs'm*

Specifically, this paper is focused on the formula “of stone and wood, the front wall and the back wall, from the foundations to the top” (*'bnm w'ḏm qdmm wm 'ḏrm bn 's²rs' 'd s²qrn*). This phase is not frozen: The order of these pairings can vary, words or phrases can be substituted for elements of each pairing, and/or various words may intrude. For instance, Ma'īn 6 “of wood and cut stone, from the foundations to the top, from the doorpost²³ to the tower” (*'ḏm wtqrm bn 's²rs' 'd s²qrn bn k'bt hlfn 'd mhfd*) and also M 347 “from the bottom to the top, the adorned façade, the front wall and the back wall, of wood and cut stone” (*bn 's²rs' 'd s²qrn 'nf mws'm qdm wm 'ḏr 'ḏm wtqr*). The front/back wall and foundations/top pairings are clearly merisms which use two specific parts of the construction to denote its entirety. As these two merisms appear alongside of and can change position with “wood and stone,” the pairing seems to function similarly: Whereas the other two merisms denote the horizontal and vertical extents of the construction, wood and stone denote its entire material composition. That is, they express that the dedicant retrieved and provided all the materials used in the construction. Hence, each pairing functions as a merism, which expresses separate ways in which the dedicant built the entire edifice.

Second, a literal reading of “wood and stone” is an incomplete description of the materials required in construction. As discussed earlier, the towers, walls, and temple mentioned in construction texts from Ytl and Qrnw were made not just of wood and stone, but also mud brick, which played an essential role in the constructions. In both places, mud brick was used as the interior of defensive fortifications. Additionally, erosion at Qrnw revealed that mud brick

²³ Mournir Arbach, “K'B” in “Le madhâbien : Lexique - Onomastique et Grammaire d'une langue de l'Arabie méridionale préislamique” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Provence Aix Marseille I, 1993), 65.

was used as the foundations for the eastern wall. Yet, mud brick is never listed among the constituent materials in any Minaic inscription.²⁴ Hence, the merism “wood and stone” symbolically encompasses not just wood and stone, but rather all materials used in construction.

It should also be noted that there are two variants within the “wood and stone” merism. In Ytl four inscriptions list two stones, such as M 164’s “of stone, wood, and limestone” (*’bnm w’ḏm wblqm*) and M 236’s “of limestone, wood, and cut stone” (*blqm w’ḏm wtqrm*).²⁵ Furthermore, Ma’īn 1 from Qrnw reads “wood, cut stone, and the stone blocks of their back wall” (*’ḏm wtqrm whbzt m’ḏrḥs’lḥm*). Yet, these expansions do not change the essential meaning of the merism, but are rather only variant forms of the standard merism. This is because they merely refer to different facets of the same construction material. As previously mentioned, only “limestone” *blq* was used to construct these fortifications—“cut stone” *tqr* refers to the decorated exterior blocks while *’bn* is the general word for stone. Similarly, “stone blocks” *ḥbzt*, as the translation states, refers to stone.²⁶

Then, why do these extra words appear? Within construction texts, minor variations are also present in the “from the foundations to the top” merism. Agostini noted several variants among various places in ancient Yemen, such as “from the construction of the façade unto the top” (*bn mbny qdmn ’d s²qrn*) in Qrnw (Ma’īn 1) and “from the foundations to the top” (*bnmw rbbm ’d s²qrm*) in Ḥaḍramawt (RES 2687). He states that this variance reflects a fixed syntactic scheme in which individual elements could have high degrees of variability.²⁷ This is corroborated by Loreto’s study of inscriptions on domestic constructions in Tamna’, the capital of the Qataban, in which he identified four variations of the foundations/top merism within the

²⁴ Breton, *Les fortifications*, 21-22.

²⁵ M 185 and M 252 use the same vocabulary as the latter.

²⁶ de Maigret and Robin, “Le temple de Nakrah à Yathill,” 482.

²⁷ Alessio Agostini, “Le iscrizioni di costruzione sudarabiche: Lessico, Archeologia, Società” (Ph.D. diss., Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2005), 361-363, 369.

same area.²⁸ Hence, as variants appear in the “from the foundations to the top” merism, so also may variation occur in “wood and stone.” Therefore, these aforementioned variants of “wood and stone” will be considered in the examination of divine favor and political-religious authority which follows.

Association with Divine Favor

The merism “wood and stone” is attested in contexts of divine favor and political-religious authority. Divine favor is visible within these inscriptions in two ways. First, the inscription frequently proclaims that the gods are “pleased” (*rḏw*) with the construction. It occurs in four inscriptions at Yṯl.²⁹ In three texts, the gods’ satisfaction with the dedicated building occurs alongside the offering of tributes. Hence, M 185 describes the construction and dedication of walls, in which the gods “were satisfied with these construction works, with their first fruits” (*ws^ltrḏw ḥlt mbntn bfr ḥs^lm*). A similar expression appear in M 283, in which the gods “were pleased” (*wys^ltrḏw*) with the dedication of a tower curtain wall, and in M 247: “‘ttr ḏ-Qbḏ was pleased with the contributions and taxes of the construction of the curtain wall” (*ws^ltrḏw ṯtr ḏqbḏ bkbwdtn w^lkrbn mbny šḥftn*). The fourth text, M 164, does not mention tribute and commemorates the construction of a tower which was done “by the command of Wdm and the pleasure of [...]” (*b^lmr wdm wmrḏwhy* [...]). The name of a divinity can be restored here, as the name of a god follows the word “pleasure” (*mrḏw*) in every other instance it appears.³⁰

The second way the construction texts indicate divine favor is by committing the construction itself to the gods for safekeeping. Some texts have the dedicants “commit” (*rṯd*)

²⁸ Romolo Loreto, “South Arabian inscriptions from domestic buildings from Tamna’ and the archaeological evidence,” *AAE* 22 (2011): 74-78.

²⁹ CSAI, <http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=26&prjId=1&corId=0&collId=0&navId=279810068&group=3&subgroup=0>.

³⁰ GOAM 314, Ma’īn 5, Ma’īn 15, MAFRAY-Darb aṣ-Ṣabī 5, Y.03.B.A.1, Y.92.B.A 29.

their dedicated buildings, inscriptions, and sometimes personal welfare to the gods so that no one may damage them. Most inscriptions containing the verb *rtđ* commit various defensive structures. Almost all of them are found on the fortifications of Ytl. The two exceptions are M 203, an inscription concerning a temple that was originally found inside of Ytl but has since been broken and lost, and Ma'in 7, which was located in Qrnw on the north tower of the east gate.³¹ The commitment of dedications in these inscriptions is fairly formulaic and usually appears near the end of the text, such as in M 283: “The clan of Yf'n committed their dedication and their inscriptions to all the gods of M'n and Ytl against anyone who would deface them from their place” (*wrtđ 'hl yf'n s'l s'm w's'trs'm kl 'l't m'n wytł bnd ys'nkrs'm bn mqmhs'm*).

Association with Political-Religious Authority

“Wood and stone” not only appears in contexts of divine favor, but also of political-religious authority as well. Avanzini stated that: “The declaration of ownership and the acknowledgment of a political-religious authority (the one which made the building possible) are... the essential purposes... leading to the commission of a [construction text].”³² I will focus on the three ways in which this context can be detected. First, the dedicants describe themselves with political-religious titles. These titles include the grandsons of the king (M 236), friends (*mwddt*) of the

³¹ CSAI, <http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=26&prjId=1&corId=0&collId=0&navId=279810068&group=3&subgroup=0>. de Maigret and Robin, “Le temple de Nakrah à Yathill,” 468, 488. The inscriptions which do this from Ytl are M 164, M 185, M 197, M 236, M 247, M 283, M 347. François Bron, *Ma'in* (Inventaire des Inscriptions Sudarabiques 3A; Paris: Boccard, 1998), 45. Additionally, Ma'in 24 reads “they committed [...]” (*wrtđ* [...]) and probably also entails committing a tower; however, it is possible that author was just committing the inscription and not the tower itself.

³² Avanzini, “For a Study on the Formulary of Construction Inscriptions,” 20. Even though Avanzini’s CSAI has a different definition of construction inscriptions than I do (and would in fact consider almost all the inscriptions which I cited as dedicatory), CSAI’s criteria on which Avanzini bases such statement would still be true of these inscriptions, regardless of how one classifies them.

king (M 172, M 197, Maʿīn 7), servants of the king (Ja 557), kabir³³ (*kbr*) (M 247, Y.92.B.A 21+30), mukarrib³⁴ (*mkrb*) (Maʿīn 1, MuB 673), and priests (Maʿīn 6, MuB 673). In two cases, the dedicant even states that they have acted by king's command (M 164) or have obtained his approval (Maʿīn 1).

Second, the declaration of the dedicants' ability to fund their construction works also reinforces their political-religious authority. Several texts mention that the work was made with the "firstfruits" (*fr'*) which the dedicants either provided or obtained from others.³⁵ Other texts mention the use of "taxes" (*'krb*) (M 102), "obligations" (*kbwdt*) (M 347, Maʿīn 7), or both (M 247, M 347, Maʿīn 1, Maʿīn 6). Some even note that the dedicants added on their own "excess" (*m'd*) to these contributions (M 185, M 197, Maʿīn 1).

Third, the dedication of buildings takes place in a religious context. Hence, seven inscriptions mention that the dedication took place during religious "festivals" *'hḏr*.³⁶ Furthermore, several mention sacrifices, ranging between 10 to 30 animal victims, such as M 197 in which the dedication took place "when [the dedicants] offered to *'ttr ḏ-Qbḏm* and *Wdm* 24 sacrifices during the festivals" (*ywm ḏbh' ttr ḏqbḏm wwdm ḏbḥm b' ḥḏrm /24/*).³⁷

³³ The exact function of this title is uncertain. Hoyland notes that such "might be the head of a tribe or professional group (e.g. 'chief of the cavalry'...) or the agent of the king in an outlying city or region... Or else he might be the leader of a trading colony abroad." Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2001), 120-121.

³⁴ For a full discussion on the function of the *mkrb*, see Abraham J Drewes, "The meaning of Sabaeen *mkrb*, facts and fiction," *Semitica* 51 (2003): 93-126.

³⁵ M 102, M 185, M 197, M 203, M 283, Maʿīn 1, Maʿīn 7.

³⁶ M 172, M 197, M 236, M 347, Maʿīn 1, Maʿīn 6, Maʿīn 7.

³⁷ See also M 172, Maʿīn 1, and Maʿīn 7. There is also the possibility that Maʿīn 6 records 166 sacrifices. Lines 2-3 read that they sacrificed "four obligations, and one obligation was forty four" (*'rb't kbwdt wkwn ḥḏ kbwdt 'rb't w'rb'hy*).

Summary

ASA construction texts containing “wood and stone” are predominately Minaic and apart from a few unprovenanced texts, occur primarily on defensive fortifications in ancient Yṯl and Qrnw. The phrase is functioning as a merism because it appears alongside and changes position with two other merisms, “the front wall and the back wall” and “from the foundations to the top.” The phrase “wood and stone” does not describe all the materials used in construction, notably its main component mud brick. This merism occurs in a context of divine favor, as the dedicants commit their construction to the gods and the gods are said to be “pleased” with their work. The inscriptions also convey that the projects were done as political-religious acts, as shown by the titles, the declaration of the dedicants’ access to wealth, and the sacrifices and festivals with which the dedications were made.

Hebrew Bible Texts

Within the Hebrew Bible, the phrase “wood and stone” seems to be used in the same way as the ASA inscriptions. To argue this, I will first survey several texts in which the phrase appears. Then, I will then argue that “wood and stone” is used as a merism in the Hebrew Bible. Lastly, I will show that the merism is used in contexts denoting divine favor and political-religious authority, specifically in ways that are comparable those of the ASA corpus.

Surveying the Texts

Unlike the ASA texts, which had a number of variations of the phrase “wood and stone,” the vocabulary of the Biblical pairing is relatively static. Only the words “wood” עץ and “stone” אבן appear together. Both are generic and encompass broad swaths of meaning, such as עץ’s “wood,”

“stick,” and “copse,” and אֶבֶן’s “rock,” “mineral deposits,” and “stone” material.³⁸ They appear in juxtaposition 33 times, albeit a merism is not always in use.³⁹ Four different variations of this phrase also appear: “Workings of stone... and workings of wood” (וּבְהִרְשֵׁת אֶבֶן... וּבְהִרְשֵׁת עֵץ) in Exod 31:5 and 35:33, “craftsmen of wood and craftsmen of stone walls” (וְחָרְשֵׁי עֵץ וְחָרְשֵׁי אֶבֶן קִיר) in 2 Sam 5:11, “almug wood... and precious stones” (וְעֵצֵי אֶלְמֻגִּים... וְאֶבֶן יָקָרָה) in 1 Kings 10:11, and “cut stone” (אֶבֶן מְחָצֵב) in 2 Kings 12:13. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on four passages containing “wood and stone” which deal with construction, all of which are in the book of Kings (1 Kings 5:32; 15:22; 2 Kings 12:13; 22:6).⁴⁰

The first text, 1 Kings 5:32, occurs within the story of Solomon’s temple construction. When Solomon becomes king, Hiram sends his servants to him because he had loved David, his father (5:15).⁴¹ Then, the Deuteronomist (Dtr), an editor who compiled the book of Kings by inserting and redacting his or her own material onto earlier source material, inserted Solomon’s response. There, Solomon tells Hiram that Yahweh has given him rest from his adversaries and that he is now planning to build a temple, as Yahweh told his father that he would (5:17-19).⁴² He then asks for Hiram to send cedar wood. Hiram responds in 5:21: “Blessed is Yahweh today who gave David a wise son over this great people” (בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְדָוִד בֶּן חָכָם עַל־הָעָם הַגָּדוֹל (הַזֶּה)). The two then make a covenant and Solomon sends a rotating 30,000 laborers to Lebanon and another 150,000 to acquire stones from the mountain (5:27-31). The chapter then concludes in 5:32 by stating that Solomon and Hiram’s workers “prepared the wood and stone to build the

³⁸ HALOT 7-8, 863-864.

³⁹ Exod 7:19; 31:5; 35:33; Lev 14:45; Deut 4:28; 28:36; 64; 29:16; 2 Sam 5:11; 1 Kings 5:32; 10:11; 15:22; 18:38; 2 Kings 12:12; 19:18; 22:6; Isa 37:19; Jer 2:27; 3:9; Ezek 20:32; 26:12; Hab 2:11, 19; Zech 5:4; Eccl 10:9; 1 Chron 22:14; 1 Chron 22:14, 15; 29:2; 2:13; 9:10; 16:6; 34:11.

⁴⁰ For the discussion below, I use the Hebrew verse numbering for all these references.

⁴¹ Based on the Septuagint’s reading, Kuan argues that Hiram of Tyre actually sends his messengers to anoint Solomon. I personally remain unconvinced of this argument, as it would then have Solomon telling Hiram, who just had anointed him, that Yahweh was the one who set him upon David’s throne (5:19). Jeffrey K. Kuan, “Third Kingdoms 5.1 and Israelite-Tyrian Relations during the Reign of Solomon,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 31-46.

⁴² Martin Noth, *Könige* (vol. 1; BKAT 9/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 88-89.

temple” (וַיִּכְיֶינִי הָעֵצִים וְהָאֲבָנִים לִבְנוֹת הַבַּיִת). Following this verse in 1 Kings 6-7 is a long description of how the temple was constructed, which describes in detail the various wood, stone, bronze, and gold works.

1 Kings 15:22 is set during the reign of Asa, king of Judah, whom Dtr commends in 15:11 as doing “right in the eyes of Yahweh” (הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה). When a war breaks out between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, Baasha begins to fortify Ramah to prevent Judah from having access to the region (15:16-17). In response, Asa takes the silver and gold in the temple and the king’s palace and sends it to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, so that he will attack Baasha (15:18). When Ben-Hadad attacks Baasha, he stops fortifying Ramah and in 15:22 Asa “summons all of Judah, no one was exempt, and they carried the stones of Ramah and its wood which Baasha built. And King Asa fortified with them Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah” (הִשְׁמִיעַ אֶת־כָּל־יְהוּדָה אֵין (וְלֹא־יָשָׁאוּ אֶת־אֲבָנֵי הָרָמָה וְאֶת־עֲצֵיהָ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בַעֲשָׂא וַיָּבֹן בָּם הַמֶּלֶךְ אָסָא אֶת־גִּבְעָה בִּנְיָמִן וְאֶת־מִצְפָּה).

Similar to 1 Kings 15:22, 2 Kings 12:13 describes another king, Jehoash, who is said to do “right in the eyes of Yahweh” (הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה) in 12:2. Jehoash commands the priests to take the silver which was brought into the temple and use it to repair the temple’s breaches (12:5-6). However, they do not fix them and Jehoash tells the priests to stop taking money until they undertake the repairs (12:7-9). In 12:10-13, Jehoiada, a priest, then has the silver put into a box and distributed to various workers, craftsmen, builders, stonemasons, and bricklayers to do the work and “to purchase the wood and cut stone to repair the breach of the temple of Yahweh” (וּלְקַנּוֹת עֲצִים וְאֲבָנִי מִחֶצֶב לְחַזֵּק אֶת־פֶּדֶק בֵּית־יְהוָה).

2 Kings 22:6 is set during the reign of Josiah, who is said to do “right in the eyes of Yahweh” (הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה) in 22:2 as Jehoash and Asa also were. Josiah orders Hilkiah the high priest to begin repairing the temple, which bears a striking number of lexical parallels to the 2

Kings 12 account above, leading most scholars to think that 2 Kings 22 borrowed from 2 Kings 12.⁴³ One of these borrowings is 22:6, which is almost exactly the same as 12:13: “To purchase the wood and cut stone to repair the temple” (וּלְקַנּוֹת עֲצִים וְאֲבָנֵי מַחְצָב לְחַזֵּק אֶת־הַבַּיִת). Thereafter, Hilkiah finds a scroll of the law which is read to Josiah. Upon hearing its words, Josiah tears his clothes and inquires of Yahweh, who states that he will destroy Judah but exempt Josiah because he was humbled and wept upon hearing of God’s impending wrath (12:8-20). Following this in chapter 23, Josiah then undertakes religious reforms, such as making a covenant with Yahweh, removing the idolatrous images and religious places from Judah, and holding Passover.

Establishing the Merism

There are three reasons to believe that “wood and stone” was used in these texts as a merism for all the construction materials. First, like in the ASA texts, if “wood and stone” is taken literally in 1 Kings 5:32, there is a failure to account for all the material used to construct the temple. This is because no origin is given for the bronze used in the temple in 1 Kings 7, such as the pillars, sea, stands, basins, and vessels—a weight so large that in 7:47 it is described as “not ascertainable” (לֹא נִקְקֶר). This difficulty is displayed by a textual insertion in Samuel. In 2 Sam 8:8, “King David takes from Betach and Berothai, the cities of Hadadezer, an exceedingly great amount of bronze” (וּמִבֶּטַח וּמִבְּרֹתַי עָרֵי הַדָּדָעְזֵר לָקַח הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד נְחֹשֶׁת הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד),⁴⁴ to which the Septuagint (or its underlying Hebrew version) adds a gloss to resolve the problem of the origin of the temple’s bronze, in which the cities’ bronze was that “with which Solomon made the bronze

⁴³ See for instance, Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation and Commentary* (AB 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 293. Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings* (trans. Anselm Hagedorn; CC; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 397-398.

⁴⁴ *HALOT* recommends emending “Betach” (בֶּטַח) to be “Tebach” (טֶבַח) following 1 Chron 18:8, but for the sake of simplicity I have retained “Betach.”

sea, the pillars, the wash basins, and all the implements” (ἐν αὐτῷ ἐποίησεν Σαλωμων τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν χαλκὴν καὶ τοὺς στύλους καὶ τοὺς λουτήρας καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη).⁴⁵

There are inconsistencies with the origin of gold used in the construction of the temple as well. If wood and stone are not understood as a merism, a major logistical and logical difficulty arises. Like bronze, gold does not appear in the list of raw materials for the temple in 1 Kings 5 even though it is frequently used in its construction (6:20-35; 7:48-50). Later, gold is said to be brought to Solomon (9:14, 28; 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 22, 25), but only after the temple has been built. A solution meant to resolve this chronological issue was added in 1 Kings 9:11, when Hiram pays Solomon 120 talents of gold to purchase towns: “Hiram King of Tyre supported Solomon with cedar wood, pine wood, and gold, for all his desire. Then, King Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in the land of Galilee” (חִירָם מֶלֶךְ-צֹר נָשָׂא אֶת־שִׁלְמָה בַּעֲצֵי אֲרָזִים וּבַעֲצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים וּבַזָּהָב לְכָל־הַפֶּצֶז אֲזַיָּתָן (הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁלְמָה לְחִירָם עֲשָׂרִים עִיר בְּאֶרֶץ הַגָּלִיל). The first half of this verse almost exactly mimics 1 Kings 5:24, which describes Solomon and Hiram’s initial trade: “Hiram gave to Solomon cedar wood, pine wood, all of his desire” (וַיְהִי חִירוֹם נָתַן לְשִׁלְמָה עֲצֵי אֲרָזִים וְעֲצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים כָּל־הַפֶּצֶז). The two passages were connected by Kuan, who wrote that the editor “supplied the gold for furnishings” so as to artificially connect “Solomon’s giving of the twenty cities to Hiram... with his building projects.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Noth notes that the addition of “then” אֲזַיָּתָן acts as a segue from the later editorial material into an older source detailing Hiram’s purchase of the cities.⁴⁷ Thus, it seems that the editor provided the manner in which the gold was acquired to build the temple, which was not explained in the older source material. Hence, even ancient versions of this text recognized the failure to account for the origin of bronze and gold in the temple construction.

⁴⁵ I am indebted to Cale Staley for originally bringing this Septuagint reading to my attention.

⁴⁶ Kuan, “Third Kingdoms 5.1 and Israelite-Tyrian Relations during the Reign of Solomon,” 38.

⁴⁷ Noth, *Könige*, 229.

Second, “wood and stone” is also used as a merism to refer to the total construction materials of idols.⁴⁸ Scholarly consensus has taken “wood and stone” in relation to idols as a reference to Asherah poles and standing stones, albeit Krašovec and Zimmerli both proposed that the phrase encompassed other materials as well.⁴⁹ Two texts hint that this latter position is correct. First, Dtr in Deut 29:16 clearly knew that idols could be made in silver and gold, as well as wood and stone: “You saw their abominations and their idols, of wood and stone, silver and gold, which were with them” (וַתֵּרְאוּ אֶת־שִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם וְאֵת גִּלְלֵיהֶם עֵץ וְאֶבֶן כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֲשֶׁר עִמָּהֶם). Yet throughout the rest of the Dtr sections of the book, the idols are merely referred to as “wood and stone” (Deut 4:28; 28:36, 64).⁵⁰ Second, though Hab 2:19 refers to idols which are “plated with gold and silver” (תְּפֹשֵׁי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף), their makers are nonetheless mocked for talking “to wood” לְעֵץ and “to stone” לְאֶבֶן. Therefore, even though the original merism may have found its origin in the wood and stone material used to make Asherah poles and standing stones, by the time that Dtr History was composed the polemic seems to be against all the “works of people’s hands” (מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם).⁵¹ To this end, “wood and stone” also has the air of insult as it emphasizes the cheapest and most common material which could be used to construct an idol.

⁴⁸ 2 Kings 19:18; Isa 37:19; Jer 2:27; Ezek 20:32; Zech 5:4

⁴⁹ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (vol. 1; trans. Ronald Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 414. Krašovec, *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen*, 74, 130. For the traditional view, see Francis Andersen and David Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 255. Julie Galambush, “God’s Land and Mine: Creation as Property in the Book of Ezekiel” in *Ezekiel’s Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* (eds., Stephen Cook and Corrine Patton; SBLSS 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 97. There is also a book about cultic trees and stones in the Bible, which is unfortunately named in light of the merism: Elizabeth C. Larocca-Pitts, “*Of Wood and Stone*”: *The Significance of Israelite Cultic Items in the Bible and its Early Interpreters* (HSM 61; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

⁵⁰ This begs the question: If Dtr used the merism itself, why was he or she not aware of the usage in 1 Kings 5:32, as the edit in 5:24a shows? It must be remembered that even though both merisms are referencing construction material, Dtr may have been unaware of its use for building construction. None of the places wherein such use appears are necessarily authored by Dtr (except perhaps Josiah’s, which could have been merely copied from the very similar Jehoshaphat’s story).

⁵¹ Deut 4:28, 2 Kings 19:18, Isa 37:19.

Third, “wood and stone” is used as a merism in *destruction* texts to indicate the complete destruction of homes, a city, and an altar. This is signified by the addition of the word “dust, plaster” עָפָר to the merism. In Lev 14:45, when a disease reappears in a house, the Israelites are commanded to tear it down “with its stone and its wood and all the dust/plaster of the house, and bring it outside the city to an unclean place” (אֶת־אֲבָנָיו וְאֶת־עֲצָיו וְאֶת כָּל־עָפָר הַבַּיִת וְהוֹצִיא אֶל־מְחוּץ לְעִיר) (אֶל־מָקוֹם טָמֵא). As in the ASA texts, mud brick, a major building material, is notably absent.⁵² In Ezekiel 26, God threatens to make Tyre “a bare rock” that will “not be rebuilt again” (26:14), with invaders who will “tear down your walls and pull down your desirable houses, and your stone and your wood and your dust they will throw amidst the water” (וְהָרְסוּ חוֹמוֹתֶיךָ וּבָתֵּי חֲמֻדָּתְךָ וְהָרְסוּ אֶת־עֲצֶיךָ וְאֶת־אֲבָנֶיךָ וְעָפָרְךָ בְּחוּף מַיִם יִשְׂמוּ). Similarly, when fire comes down to consume Elijah’s altar in 1 Kings 18:38, it consumes “the whole burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust. And the water in the trench it lapped up” (אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הָעֵצִים וְאֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֶת־הָעָפָר וְאֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּתֶּעֱלָה) (לַחֲקָה).⁵³

Within these contexts, it is clear that the authors do not only have the stone, wood, and dust in mind, but anything else that may compose the construction in question. This is corroborated by 1 Kings 20:10, when Ben-Hadad vows to destroy Samaria and invokes a curse on himself “if there is enough dust in Samaria to fill the hands of all the people who are following me” (אִם־יִשְׁפֹּק עָפָר שְׁמֵרוֹן לִשְׁעָלִים לְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּרַגְלִי).⁵⁴ The use of dust here signifies the extent to which Ben-Hadad will decimate Samaria—nothing will be left. This is in contrast to the aforementioned 1 Kings 15:22, in which Asa commands the removal of only wood and stone

⁵² Douglas Clark, “Bricks, Sweat and Tears: The Human Investment in Constructing a ‘Four-Room’ House,” *NEA* 66:34-43.

⁵³ It is tempting to consider that this merely describes the order in which the fire, which came from above, consumed the altar. However, as the wood and stone pairing is used so frequently in Kings, I believe the merism is being invoked.

⁵⁴ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel* (2 vols.; AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 534.

from Ramah. Dust is not mentioned there because the emphasis is on looting the usable construction material, not on utterly destroying the place.

In the above discussion, I have provided three arguments that “wood and stone” is used as a merism in construction contexts: In 1 Kings 5, “wood and stone” explains what might seem at first to be a hole in the construction narrative of the temple, in Deut 29:16 and Hab 2:19 “wood and stone” is used to refer to idols of silver and gold, and in Lev 14:45, Ezek 26:14, and 1 Kings 18:38 “wood, stone, and dust” is used to refer to the complete destruction of homes, a city, and an altar.

Association with Divine Favor

There are two ways in which the merism appears in contexts of divine favor. First, when dust is included in the merism it is associated with divine *disfavor* in connection with the presence of a contagion. As previously mentioned, in every instance in which “wood and stone” is combined with “dust, plaster” (עֶפֶר), the object in question is totally destroyed. This destruction is not a simple removal, but rather functions as an apotropaic ritual that removes the potency of objects perceived as oppositional to God. This is done by completely destroying and casting them outside of the community.⁵⁵ Hence, in Lev 14:45 the house in which a disease keeps reappearing must have its wood, stone, and dust removed and brought “outside the city to an unclean place” (אֶל־מְחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל־מָקוֹם טָמֵא). Anyone who enters, eats, or sleeps in the house beforehand is deemed

⁵⁵ Lauren Monroe, *Josiah's Reform and the Dynamics of Defilement: Israelite Rites of Violence and the Making of a Biblical Text* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 23-30. David Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rite in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (SBLDS 101; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 89. Perhaps the sole exception to this is 1 Kings 18:38, in which the altar which Elijah constructs in contest with the prophets of Baal is consumed “the whole burnt offering, the wood, the stone, and the dust—and the water which was in the trench it licked up” (אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הָעֵצִים וְאֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֶת־הָעֶפֶר וְאֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּתְּעֹלָה לִחְכָה). Here, the altar does not appear to be the contagion. However, after it is consumed, Elijah does then take the prophets of Baal down to Wadi Kishon and slaughter them there (18:40). Perhaps the removal of the altar here serves as the impetus for the contagion, the prophets of Baal, to be removed.

unclean (14:46-47). Similarly, in Ezekiel 26:3-4, Yahweh says to Tyre: “See, I am against you, oh Tyre... and I will scrape [Tyre’s] dust from upon it and make it as a bare rock” (וְסָחִיתִי עֲפָרָהּ) (הַנִּגְנִי עָלֶיךָ צֹר... מִמָּנָה וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָהּ לְצָחִיחַ סָלֵעַ). This is followed later by the aforementioned appearance of the merism in 26:14, where the invaders cast Tyre’s wood, stone, and dust into the water. This provides an interesting contrast with the ASA material: Whereas Biblical authors show divine curse warranting destruction of an edifice, ASA dedicants seek divine blessing by committing their dedication to the protection of the gods.

The second way in which divine favor is noted is the manner that Dtr frames the kings who build the projects as receiving Yahweh’s approval. Three of the four relevant kings, Asa (1 Kings 15:11), Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 22:3), and Josiah (2 Kings 22:2) are all praised by Dtr for doing “right in the eyes of Yahweh” (הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה). The fourth, Solomon, does not receive this commendation, but Dtr (and possibly a post-Dtr redactor at points) composes and attributes to Solomon a rather long prayer to commemorate the temple (1 Kings 8:22-61) and thereafter also adds Yahweh’s appearance to him in a dream, in which Yahweh says that he has hallowed the temple, will set his own name there forever, and will establish Solomon’s throne in perpetuity if he keeps Yahweh’s statutes (1 Kings 9:2-9).⁵⁶ Furthermore, Dtr also inserts a message from Solomon to Hiram in which Solomon requests cedars for the temple and declares that Yahweh has given him rest from his enemies and put him on the throne (5:18-19). This framing parallels that found in the ASA texts, in which divine favor is also attributed to the undertaking of construction projects.

⁵⁶ Most scholars accepted Dtr’s hand is at work in these passages, albeit Cogan is skeptical of post-Dtr’s involvement. G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings* (NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 197-199, 209. Burke Long, *1 Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature* (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids, MI: 1984), 94, 108. Simon DeVries, *1 Kings* (vol. 1; WBC 12; Waco, TX: World Books, 1985), 122-123. Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10; New York: 2000), 292-3, 297.

Association with Political-Religious Authority

Within the Hebrew Bible, a connection to political-religious authority is visible in three instances. First, all the primary actors in these texts are kings, a position of political-religious authority. This is similar to the ASA texts, which similarly note the various political-religious positions of their dedicants.

Second, the Biblical texts emphasize the king's access to religious funds, similar to how ASA inscriptions emphasize their dedicants' ability to fund construction works. In addition to Solomon's funding of the temple construction, 1 Kings 7:51 also states that Solomon put into the completed temple "the votive offerings of his father, silver, gold, and vessels" (אֶת־קִדְשֵׁי אָבִיו | דָּוָד אָבִיו) (אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־הַזָּהָב וְאֶת־הַכֵּלִים). Similarly, in 1 Kings 15:15 Asa brings into the temple "the votive offerings of his father and the votive offerings of the temple of Yahweh; silver, gold, and vessels" (אֶת־קִדְשֵׁי אָבִיו וְקִדְשֵׁי בֵּית יְהוָה כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וְכֵלִים) (15:15). Later, Asa then takes this silver and gold and gives it to Ben-Hadad to attack Baasha, and subsequently loots Ramah when Baasha has to retreat. In both Jehoash and Josiah's temple repair accounts, the king commands the priests to use silver within the temple to pay for the repairs, with Josiah even detailing how it should be specifically dispersed (2 Kings 12:4-5; 22:4-7).

Third, Solomon and Josiah's temple repairs occur with sacrifices and in connection to festivals, which were also observed in the ASA texts. Solomon is said to hold a massive festival upon the completion of the temple, during which he sacrificed hundreds of thousands of animals (1 Kings 8). Moreover, after a scroll is found during temple repairs, Josiah initiates cultic reforms, one of which is the observance of Passover for the first time since the judges of Israel (2 Kings 23:21-23).

Conclusion and Implications

Though long ignored, the ASA construction texts provide insight to the relevant Biblical texts by the shared usage of the merism “wood and stone” in contexts of divine favor and political-religious authority. To this end, I have focused on Minaic texts from the ancient fortifications in Ytl and Qrnw and several passages in Kings. The use of the merism in the ASA is evident because the texts do not list all the known building materials which were used and because “wood and stone” occurs alongside two other clear merisms “the front wall and the back wall” and “from the foundations to the top.” Evidence for the merism in the Kings texts is derived from a seemingly incomplete accounting for the origin of bronze and gold in 1 Kings 5:32, texts concerning destruction and idols in which “wood and stone” seems to function as a merism, and the use of “wood and stone” in conjunction with “dust” to denote complete destruction of an object. In both corpora, the merism occurs in contexts of divine favor, as is seen by the statement that the gods were “pleased” with the construction in ASA and that the Biblical kings did “right in the eyes of Yahweh.” And while in the ASA texts the dedicants commit edifices to gods so that the construction will not be destroyed, the Biblical texts associate destruction with divine disfavor. In both corpora, the merism also appears in contexts of political-religious authority: The subjects of both texts frequently hold some political-religious position, their access to funding is emphasized, and the dedication of constructions often occur during religious festivals and alongside sacrifices.

The parallels between the two corpora help address two things. On a small scale, they shed light on Exod 7:19, in which during the first plague on Egypt, Yahweh commands Aaron to stretch his hand out over Egypt’s waters, “over their rivers, their streams, their reed-pools, and all collecting places of their waters, that they may become blood, and there will be blood in all

the land of Egypt, and in the wood, and in the stones” (עַל־מִימֵי מַצְרַיִם עַל־נְהָרָתָם עַל־יֵאֲרִיקָם) (ועל־אֲגָמִיקָם וְעַל כָּל־מִקְוֵה מִימִיקָם וַיְהִי־דָם וַהֲיָה דָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּבְעֵצִים וּבְאֲבָנִים). There have been numerous interpretations of this passage, which have viewed “wood and stone” as a reference to water which is in wood and stone vessels, inside literal trees and stones, poured over idols, or inside buildings.⁵⁷ However, in light of the ASA inscriptions, perhaps “wood and stone” should be taken as referring to everything which is in the land. This would merely be another way of expressing the phrase which precedes it, “there will be blood in all the land of Egypt.”

More broadly, these parallels hint at a deeper inland tradition between ancient Palestine and South Arabia which shares the same notions of how political-religious authority ought to be expressed. In this tradition, certain actions executed by those in authority warrant either divine favor or disfavor. I have highlighted divine favor in relation to the topic of construction, which bears the linguistic connection of the “wood and stone” merism. Also falling within this tradition is *ḥērem*. In both Hebrew and ASA, this root signified the act of decimating the population of an enemy town followed by the erection of an imposing cultic structure to the leader’s national god in a highly visible place. Aside from the appearance of *ḥērem* in the Moabite Mesha Stele, these two parallels are unique to ancient Palestine and South Arabia and are not attested in any other region.⁵⁸ We may perhaps add to this Frantsouzoff’s argument for a parallel between the 2nd commandment and three Ḥaḍramitic texts which he believes prohibited the creation of images of gods.⁵⁹ And while Multhoff has debunked his linguistic arguments, his perception that Biblical

⁵⁷ For a survey of all the different views, see C. Houtman, “On the Meaning of ūbā‘ēšīm ūbā‘ābānīm in Exodus VII 19,” *VT* 36 (1986): 347-352.

⁵⁸ This parallel was first only briefly noticed by Ryckmans, but given full length treatment by Monroe. Jacques Ryckmans, “Biblical and Old South Arabian Institutions: Some Parallels” in *Arabian and Islamic Studies* (eds. R. Bidwell and G. Smith; London: Longman, 1983), 15. Lauren Monroe, “Israelite, Moabite, and Sabaeen War *ḥērem* Traditions and the Forging of National Identity: Reconsidering the Sabaeen Text RES 3945 in Light of Biblical and Moabite Evidence” *VT* 57 (2007): 319-26, 335-341.

⁵⁹ Serguei A. Frantsouzoff, “A Parallel to the Second Commandment in the Inscriptions of Raybūn,” *PSAS* 28 (1998): 61-67.

prohibitions might parallel the lack of images of gods found in South Arabia is still a possibility.⁶⁰ If so, the creation of these images by a political-religious authority might warrant divine disfavor, as visible in the repeated condemnations of Jeroboam for making the golden calves throughout the book of Kings. Sadly, apart from these studies, research into the connection between ancient Palestine and Yemen is presently only rudimentary and minimal in its impact on Biblical studies. But if there truly is a deeper inland tradition between the two regions which has yet to be explored fully, further scholarship could unearth deep and far-reaching connections in trade, societal structure, and religion that would be enlightening to the history of both ancient peoples.

⁶⁰ Anne Multhoff, “‘A Parallel to the Second Commandment...’ Revisited,” *PSAS* 39 (2009): 295-297. She does cite a Sabaeen text mentioning idols as one of her evidences against aniconism. However, Frantsouzoff’s texts are Ḥaḍramitic, and hence may not share the same customs, and also the text which she cites postdates Frantsouzoff’s by at least 200 years.

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